

MOUNT SUNAPEE ADVISORY COMMITTEE (RSA 21-G:11)

June 2, 2015 MINUTES (DRAFT)

A meeting of the Mount Sunapee Advisory Committee (MSAC) was held at the Newbury Town Offices on June 2, 2015.

Call to Order. Commissioner Jeffrey J. Rose, as chairman, called the meeting to order at 9:34 a.m. Members present were Director Philip Bryce/Div. Parks and Recreation (DPR), Sara Colson/Lake Sunapee Region Chamber (LSRC), Tim Drew/Dept. Environmental Services (DES), June Fichter/Lake Sunapee Protective Association (LSPA), Nancy Marashio/Society for the Protection of NH Forests (SPNHF), Nathan Miller/Upper Valley Lake Sunapee Regional Planning Commission (UVLSRPC), Sabrina Stanwood/Div. Forests and Lands (DFL), and Dan Wolf/Town of Newbury.

Also present were members of the public, Jay Gamble/Mount Sunapee Resort, Jake Lamontagne/DPR, and Torene Tango-Lowy/MWC clerk.

Minutes. Ms. Marashio requested a correction to the April 16, 2015 minutes. Ms. Stanwood moved to approve the minutes, as amended; Mr. Drew seconded. The minutes were adopted as amended.

AOP 2015-2016. Mr. Gamble presented the Annual Operating Plan 2015-2016 (AOP). The Adventure Park and wedding/business events bookings have increased the summer usage of the park. The Summit Sky Rides schedule is on pg. 9, and the summer events schedule to date are listed on pg. 10 of the AOP. Skier visits for the 2014-2015 ski season was 261,000, over 143 days. Weather permitting, the planned 2015-2016 winter season is November 27, 2015 through April 10, 2016.

Mount Sunapee Resort continues to support the efforts of the New England Handicapped Sports Association (NEHSA). The Sun Bowl Quad was replaced in 2014 with a high-speed quad. There were 697 hours logged for snowmaking last winter; the five-year average is approx. 714 hours.

Special Use Permits were reissued by the Dept of Resources and Economic Development (DRED) to Mount Sunapee Resort for the use of the Sun Bowl access road, the winter use of the State Beach parking lot, and the use of the Bowl Road for a mountain bike trail. The State Beach parking lot was used for overflow parking seven times during the 2014-2015 ski season; the five-year average is eight times, typically during peak holiday weekends. Mount Sunapee Resort has renewed its contracts with the League on NH Craftsmen and the Waffle Cabin.

Mr. Gamble reports that the replacement of snow guns has resulted in improved electrical energy efficiencies: upgrades of snow guns will continue in 2015. Mount Sunapee Resort has invested over \$20 million in capital improvements since July, 1998. They propose an estimated \$700,000 in capital improvements and maintenance work this summer that includes mountain biking trails in the Adventure Park (AOP, pg. 37). To enable lead time in permitting, Mount Sunapee Resort has added their list of proposed projects planned for the 2016-2017 operating season (AOP, pg. 38). Those projects include replacing the North Peak Triple with the Sun Bowl Quad, and installing the North Peak Triple as the new Sun Bowl Triple and its associated ski trail and snowmaking.

Committee members discussed the AOP: • Mount Sunapee Resort (Resort) plans to reapply for DES permits scheduled to lapse, and will send a copy of its spill management plan to DES; • Existing Best Management Practices (BMPs) for stormwater runoff are being upheld; • It was suggested that the Resort use the state beach parking lot for employee parking; • The Resort updates its Emergency Operations Plan every six months and recently held a joint training exercise with the Town of Newbury; • The Resort hosts Newbury's Town Meeting and held a benefit for an injured Newbury resident; • The Resort continues its discussions with the Sunapee Ragged Kearsarge Greenway Coalition (SRKGC) through Mr. Gold and is proposing spring cleanup of the Summit and Lake Solitude trails. Commissioner Rose asked that members provide him with any other comments on the AOP by close of business June 15, 2015.

MDP/EMP 2015-2019. Commissioner Rose said that the written public comment period on his draft decision on the Master Development Plan/Environmental Management Plan 2015-2016 (MDP/EMP) ends at 4 p.m. on June 5, 2015. Although not a counting exercise, over 350 comments have been received to date. He seeks substantive comments on his draft decision: what areas had he missed? what needs further consideration? He asked the committee for their comments.

Ms. Colson said the Lake Sunapee Region Chamber represents business interests and understands both sides of the debate. The Chamber's board is supportive of the Commissioner's draft decision as a good, win-win compromise on the issues.

Ms. Marashio, Society for the Protection of NH Forests submitted her comments in writing. She said many questions still remain, but the crucial question is what best serves the public interest? She asked what impact does the expanded identification of exemplary growth have on newly proposed or previously approved by not constructed projects in the MDPs and AOPs (see written comments).

Mr. Drew said Dept of Environmental Services (DES) is generally in favor of the draft decision as balancing the issues. The Resort has an excellent compliance record, and DES expects it to continue.

Mr. Miller said a subcommittee of the Upper Valley Lake Sunapee Regional Planning Commission reviewed the MDP/EMP for its regional impacts and will follow up with written comments to DRED. Can impacts to Polygon D be eliminated entirely, or can the trail associated with the lift be eliminated to further reduce the impacts? The parking needs are overestimated and the beach parking lot can be used in a more formal way, especially for employee parking, thereby reducing or eliminating the need for parking lot #4. Although the mountain coaster would not reach the upper areas of Polygon 32 that contain the older trees, what mitigates the coaster impacts? What are the "mechanics" of the details for the permanent prohibition of further development in the East Bowl? An MOU is recommended between the Resort and DRED for the maintenance of hiking trails. The reroute of the Summit Trail, trail erosion, and minimization of hiking and ski trail crossings need to be addressed further. The updated traffic impact study should include local town involvement and DRED should add the Dept of Transportation district engineer as an additional member to MSAC.

Ms. Fichter said the Lake Sunapee Protective Association (LSPA) does not take a vote on political issues, but should the West Bowl expansion be approved, the LSPA will provide assistance with the implementation phase of projects as they pertain to water resources, streams and related permitting.

Mr. Wolf said the Town of Newbury generally approves of the conceptual plans of the MDP. Newbury is concerned about increased demand for town services that will not be reimbursed by the West Bowl expansion located in Goshen. They suggest having a real estate specialist review the amended lease agreement, especially regarding added protections for the State on any reassignment of the lease.

Ms. Stanwood said the Natural Heritage Bureau (NHB) appreciates the minimization of impacts to the exemplary natural community in Polygon D and would like to further explore higher value study of these community systems to improve NHB's ability to identify high quality examples of exemplary natural communities statewide, to improve utilization of the NHB database for up-to-date assessments, and to provide context to impacts through comparisons with other similar communities. The NHB recognizes that the projects proposed in the East Bowl were previously approved by DRED.

SPNHF, DES, and the UVLSRPC will follow up with formal written responses to the Commissioner and appreciate that DRED and the Commissioner considered the public comments received on the MDP/EMP. Commissioner Rose expressed his appreciation of the time and dedication of the MSAC to this process.

Adjourn. Mr. Wolf moved to adjourn; Mr. Drew seconded. The meeting adjourned at 10:30 a.m.

Submitted by Torene Tango-Lowy, MSAC clerk